THE VISION OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER

and other Verse

ALFRED C. FRYER

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THE VISION OF S. CHRISTOPHER

[*Anderson*

S. Christopher.

(AFTER TITIAN.)

The Vision of S. Christopher

AND OTHER VERSE

BY

ALFRED C. FRYER

Author of "The Babe of Bethlehem"

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Christmas

The Vision of S. Christopher

✠ ✠ ✠

OFFERO, a mighty Giant,
Wandered far o'er land and sea,
Seeking for a noble monarch,
Who in very truth should be
Greater than all earthly heroes,
Strong in prowess, brave of race,
Wise as Zion's Temple-Builder,
High in fame and cultured grace;
Crowned with laurels, rich in honours,
Such a King would be a lord,
Who might claim this Giant's homage
And the offer of his sword.

Far in distant lands he journeyed,
Seeking East and seeking West,
Toiling over burning deserts,
Climbing up some mountain-crest:

Here and there a kinglet chieftain
Briefly ruled in regal power,
But he saw each kingdom vanish
In a dark eventful hour;
All in vain he sought that Master,
Who, alone, should rule supreme,
And, alas! he chased a shadow
Like a phantom in a dream.

Then it was he found a monarch,
Rich in wisdom, rich in gold,
Sovereign lord of countless vassals,
Ruling nations manifold.
Long the Giant served this Master—
Great in deed and high in fame,
Till, one day, that ruler trembled
At the sound of Satan's name.

So he sought the King of Darkness
In a wilderness of sand,
Where he found his awful presence
With his dread Satanic band—
Mighty host of cruel demons,
Human souls in darkness lost,
Shapeless forms of lust and murder
Working ruin at all cost,

While above them sin and evil
Like the gathering clouds of night
Veiled the dazzling rays of splendour
Of the sun's perpetual light.

"I will serve the greatest monarch!"
Cried the Giant bold and free,
"And to him I'll pay my homage,
And to him I'll bend my knee."

"Satan's realm is world-embracing!"
Shouted loud that vast array,
"All must own his sway and sceptre,
All have sinned and gone astray."
So he marched with Satan's banner
On the common road of life,
And he served that awful master
On the battlefield of strife.
Yet he found his king in terror
When he saw a wooden Cross,
And he heard him mutter grimly,
"His the gain while mine the loss—
CHRIST has triumphed, I am ruined."
Thus the Giant knew at length,
Satan feared a greater Monarch,
Satan feared a higher strength!

So he fled from evil shadows
  Towards the golden light of day,
And he sought for that vast Kingdom
  Where the CHRIST must wield His sway,
But, alas! no one could tell him
  Where that country could be found—
None had seen its mighty armies,
  None had heard their trumpets sound;
Thus he wandered ever onward
  Over mountain, flood, and fell,
Till, at last, he heard the tinkling
  Of a Hermit's tiny bell.

"Mighty Giant!" cried the Hermit,
  "Seekest thou an earthly rest,
Or—perchance thou art a pilgrim,
  Bent upon a holy quest—
Bent on finding that fair Kingdom
  Where the CHRIST shall reign for aye,
Where His soldiers laud His conquest
  Through an everlasting day?"
"Yes, I seek the CHRIST," he answered,
  "But I cannot find His court,
Nor His white embattled city,
  Nor His strongly-guarded fort,

Nor His legions who have triumphed
Over lust and greed and sin.
Tell me how to find that city,
How I too may enter in?"

"'Tis, my son, no easy journey
Towards that cypress-crownèd height,
Where the Holy City shineth
In a blaze of dazzling light.
Yet, with prayer, and fast, and vigil,
With a pure and humble mind,
Bearing burdens for thy Master,
Thou at last the way may find."

"I know naught of prayer and fasting,"
Sighed the Giant sad and low,
"But in service for this Master
None shall say that I am slow,
Though it be but weeding meadows
Or by counting grains of sand,
CHRIST shall claim each humble effort
I can offer with my hand."

Then the noble-minded Giant
Stood upon a river-bank
Where an ebbing flow of water
Ever rose and ever sank;

There the weary pilgrims struggled
With the rushing, surging tide,
Fording there the angry river,
With no aid and with no guide.
So the Hermit said unto him,
"Thou must be their help and stay,
Thou must bear them o'er the torrent,
Speed them safely on their way.
Thus thy strength shall be thy service:
Though thou cannot pray and fast,
Yet, I know the CHRIST will love thee—
Thou shalt see His face at last."

Through the burning days of summer,
Through the winter bleak and cold,
Offero most gladly laboured,
Seeking neither praise nor gold;
Wanderers and weary pilgrims
Blessed the Giant for his care,
Saying that such noble courage
With no other could compare.
Thus the days and years sped onward—
Still the Giant sought no rest,
Treating every passing stranger
As his friend and as his guest,

Aiding each to ford the river,
Helping each to bear his load;
Gracious to the humblest pilgrim,
Speeding all upon their road.
In a night of storm and tempest,
When the river-flood ran high,
Came a sound of childish weeping
Like a sad, pathetic cry:
"Offero!" the voice repeated,
"I must seek the other side,
Yet, before Me flows yon river
Deep and strong in swollen tide.'

By that rushing flood of water
Stood a Child of tender form,
Bending like a fragile flower
'Midst the fury of the storm:
"Trust in me," the Giant answered,
"I have heard Thy anxious plea;
I will bear Thee on my shoulder
Through this wild and stormy sea."

Brave in heart the Giant struggled
With that ever-whirling tide,
Never had its force been equalled,
Never had it seemed so wide.

Swirling waters round him eddied,
But his ashen staff was strong;
Angry winds sped by in fury,
Howling some Titanic song;
Yet the shore seemed far and distant,
And he sighed in deep despair,
For the Child upon his shoulder
Was too heavy now to bear.
"Child! Who art Thou?" cried the Giant,
Bending 'neath his crushing weight;
"Lo! the world is not as heavy,
And its burden not so great."

Then the Child, with eyes of wonder,
Gazed upon that Giant form
Struggling hard for his new Master,
Bravely fighting with the storm.
"Not the world, but its Creator
Thou art bearing through the sea."
And in sweetest accents added,
"*Christopher* thy name shall be."

Angry billows ceased their turmoil,
Raging winds in silence sank
As the Holy Child was landed
Safely on the river-bank.

Wrapt in deepest awe and wonder,
Low the Giant bent his head,
But, alas! the Child departed,
Like a dream the Vision fled.
Ere his soul could feel the sadness
Stood the Saviour by his side
In an aureole of brightness,
Wondrous fair and glorified,
With His piercèd hands uplifted
Blessed He Christopher the brave,
Who for CHRIST had borne his burden
Through the storm and through the wave.
So from out the midnight darkness
Christopher had found a place
Where the CHRIST had touched his eyelids,
And he saw Him face to face—
Saw Him radiant in glory
Like the swiftly-dawning day,
Flooding all the world in brightness,
Chasing gloom and doubt away.

Floating softly, like sweet music,
Down the avenue of time,
Comes the Vision of the Unseen,
Wondrous, beautiful, sublime!

Many legends of the CHRIST-Child
Shine like jewels rich and rare,
Yet, no other lovely story
Can at all with this compare:
All who seek the Light Eternal,
All who bear the CHRIST-Child's load
Shall behold the Vision splendid,
As they journey on their road.

Our Soul's Desire

✠ ✠ ✠

THE stars grow pale upon the Christmas morn,
And chilling wind blows in the barren cave;
Yet Mary's heart with new-found joy is brave,
For, lo! the CHRIST, the King of Love, is born.

Angelic hosts behold His peaceful rest,
And wrapt in wonder see the King of kings,
While His glad mother crooning softly sings
And cradles Him upon her throbbing breast.

So cold Thy welcome from a world undone!
So few Thy humble wants, yet no man cares!
Although Thou camest here to succour theirs,
O Blessèd, Peerless Babe! Most Holy One!

Thy wants and needs we too shall ever meet,
Though we dwell far from holy Palestine;
The poor, the sad, and weak, dear LORD, are Thine
Thou standest here as they pass down our street.

Should those imploring hands, so frail and thin,
Indeed be His that knock upon our gate;
Oh, tarry not, for it may be too late
To then unbar the door and let Him in!

O CHRIST! our LORD! our cold, dead hearts inspire
With Thy strong love for all our human race;
Oh, grant to us, dear LORD, Thy saving grace,
For Thou alone canst be our soul's Desire.

The Legend of the Christmas Rose

✠ ✠ ✠

AN Angel choir in rapture sings;
And music of seraphic wings
Is heard upon the holy night
When shepherds kneel in pale starlight
Before the Holy Child new-born,
While darkness hides the breaking dawn.

Beside His manger wept a maid—
For she had naught that could be laid
As gift upon His lowly bed
Save love and tears that she might shed—
When, lo! the herald of that night
Passed by in blaze of shining light,
And kissed her eyes, and then she found
Clusters of roses on the ground.

"Fair rose of Paradise," she cried,
"Your buds and blossoms, opening wide,

Shall crown the Infant Saviour's head
And hang in garlands round His bed,
And deck His manger like a shrine,
For these pure blooms are gifts of mine."

When earth is hid in winter snows,
We find the maiden's Christmas rose;
All pure, and fair, and shining white,
It still adorns the Holy Night.
When we feel sad, and lone, and lost,
And our poor hearts are tempest-tost,
May GOD'S own angel kiss our eyes
And bring a rose from Paradise.

May GOD send thee this holy night
A Christmas rose as pure and white
As that which crowned His infant head,
And decked with blooms His manger bed.

The Babe of Bethlehem*

✣ ✣ ✣

SWEET and clear the Christmas bells
Softly sound o'er moors and fells,
And their iron tongues proclaim
Homage to the Saviour's Name.

Men who follow learning's star
Come to Bethlehem from far;
Low before the manger fall,
Offering to CHRIST their all.

Others grope through gloom and night,
Find at last its shining light;
And their sweetest hymns of praise
To the Infant King upraise.

* These verses marked with an asterisk have been set to music by Cedric Bucknall, Mus. Bac., Oxon., and published under the title of *The Babe of Bethlehem*.

Artists, poets, all combine,
Consecrating at this shrine
Rhythmic music, painting, lays—
Each his song of lofty praise.

Nobles give their crowns of gold,
Rich men bring their wealth untold;
All is laid at JESUS' feet,
All His royal birthday greet.

Babe of Bethlehem, grant me
Faith to come and worship Thee;
At Thy manger, lo! I fall,
Humblest suppliant of all.

Christmas Eve

✣ ✣ ✣

THE sheep are folded, and the frost-bound rills
In icicles adorn the sleeping hills;
The shining worlds above our vigil share,
And calmness reigns throughout the midnight air.
Once more the music of the Christmas bells
Awakens echo on the distant fells;
Once more we keep the Birth-night of our King,
And, ever joyful, Alleluia sing.

"Lo, the star went before them"
"I am the Bright and Morning Star"

✠ ✠ ✠

OUR pilgrim steps are shrouded
By shadows of the night,
Our pathway lies in valleys
Where gleams no earthly light:
Star celestial, lead us through the night of sorrow!
Guide us till the dawning of the golden morrow!

We climb the lofty mountains—
The goal of our desire,
And, yet, Thy clear light beckons
To peaks that rise still higher:
Star celestial, lead us through the night of sorrow!
Guide us till the dawning of the golden morrow!

Lead on till morning breaketh
When shadows flee away,
And nothing veils the splendour
Of GOD'S eternal day:
Star celestial, lead us through the night of sorrow!
Guide us till the dawning of the golden morrow!

S. Martin and the Beggar*

✠ ✠ ✠

SAINT Martin, on a journey speeding,
Met a beggar on the road,
Who shivered in his rags and tatters,
Bending 'neath his heavy load.
The good saint saw his sad condition,
Standing there in pelting rain;
With joy he shared his mantle with him,
By dividing it in twain.

All dark and weird the night-clouds gathered,
Strong the north wind blew his blast;
Saint Martin, as he faced the tempest,
His half-mantle round him cast,
But little comfort gained he from it,
For his limbs were cold and numb;
And yet his heart made merry music
Though his lips were still and dumb.

Great hailstones fell upon Saint Martin—
Cruel was their fierce attack—

And still the good man never murmured,
Never wished his mantle back.
The whirling snowflakes blew around him,
And he sighed, "Alas, poor soul!
What good was half a mantle to thee?
Would I'd given thee the whole!"

The drifting snow blocked all the roadway,
Birds fell dead in freezing air;
All pitiless seemed nature to him,
Yet the saint did not despair.
In fury raged the storm-wind round him,
Till he sank beneath its blow;
And, bruised and weary, sleep came o'er him
Lying on the frozen snow.

In vision fair he saw the CHRIST-Child,
'Midst eternal realms of day,
While round His form hung half the mantle
Which Saint Martin gave away.
May we behold that "Vision Splendid,"
See again the CHRIST-Child's form,
As, clad in our poor birthday presents,
He will guide us through life's storm.

A Legend of the Three Kings

✣ ✣ ✣

WHEN the star-led Eastern kings
Came to worship CHRIST the LORD,
Each unstrapped his golden spurs,
Each unloosed his jewelled sword;
Robes and incense, gold and myrrh,
Kingly tribute, gladly paid,
All were brought to Bethlehem,
All were in the manger laid.

Lo! the first king, kneeling, said,
"Faith's bright star has guided me;
Thus I bring a golden crown
As my loyal gift to Thee;
When at last I fall asleep,
And I pass beyond all strife,
Child, most blessèd, bright and fair,
Give to me a crown of life."

Then the second monarch cried,
"Silken robes of royal red,

Woven fine in fairest hues,
Lay I on Thy manger-bed;
At the solemn day of doom
Give to me a robe of light,
So that I may ever be
Clad in vesture pure and white."

Quoth the third chief, bending low,
"Holy Child, this myrrh I bring,
Therewith would I fain anoint
CHRIST the Everlasting King:
Costly incense, sweet and rare,
Blessèd Babe I offer Thee,
When it floats before Thy Throne
May its fragrance plead for me."

Then the Magi rode away,
Gifts are given, homage paid,
Robes and incense, gold and myrrh,
All are in the manger laid!
What can we bestow as gifts,
Holy Child, what can we bring?
Loving hearts and loyal wills—
These we offer to our King!

Gloria in Excelsis

✣ ✣ ✣

OUR thoughts glide back to many a Christmas Day,
When our young waking souls were fresh and gay;
And all the world was glad with joyous song
Ere we had suffered grief or bitter wrong.

Our lives are mingled strangely with the past,
Our fleeting joys are sadly overcast,
And we who gathered in the dear old home
Are scattered wide. In distant lands some roam,
And some in far-off graves are laid to rest
Who came at Christmastide as kin or guest;
While some the jostling crowd have hid from sight
Who once made bygone Yules both glad and bright.

May we not share the high Angelic song,
Or join the children in their joyous throng?
May not our feeble voices now upraise,
For CHRIST'S Nativity, the hymn of praise?

And though earth's shadows cross our pilgrimage,
And tears still blot the story of life's page,
For us the Babe of Bethlehem is born,
For us the sky is radiant with the morn
That broke on that first far-off Christmas Day,
And brought the world the Light, the Truth, the Way.

This day we greet the birthday of our King,
And to the new-born Child sweet anthems sing,
For now, as in those distant ages dim,
His tender love draws all men unto Him.

That Holy Birth is no mere memory past,
'Tis something deeper far—a joy held fast
As true for us as when in David's town
The shepherds saw the angel host come down.

The Tree of Peace

THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

✣ ✣ ✣

PAGAN priests in solemn circle
Stand beneath their sacred tree,
Chanting weird and ancient sagas
To a mystic melody;
Serf and freeman, thane and chieftain,
March around in vast array,
Singing to the pine-trees' music
And the night wind's mournful lay.
Far and wide their chant is swelling,
Rising high and falling low;
While a priest, with golden sickle,
Cuts the berried mistletoe.
Lo! upon the pagan altar
Lies a fair and lithesome boy;
Wondering he gazes round him,
Trembling both with fear and joy—

Joy because his kith and kindred
Stand among the hosts around,
Fear for no one dares to tell him
Why he is a captive bound.

"Sacrifice, ye priests of Woden!"
Cry the people one and all,
"Heimdal, open wide the portal
Of Walhalla's wondrous hall!
Let this child, O great Allfather,
Plead our wants and plead our needs,
Send us legions of great heroes—
Chieftains famed for golden deeds:
Mighty heroes, leave your feasting,
Gird on sword and helmet bright;
Thor himself, the god of thunder,
Leads you forth into the fight.
Drive, oh, drive the White CHRIST from us,
Drive away His hated band;
Drive them o'er the rolling ocean
Back to England's sea-girt land.
We stand faithful to Walhalla,
Faithful to the gods of yore;
Woden, aid us, we entreat thee,
Help us now and evermore!"

Down a glade of leafless branches,
Like a vast cathedral-aisle,
Two by two, the monks from England
Pass along in solemn file.
Torch and incense borne before them,
And with gleaming cross on high,
They will triumph for their Master,
Or for Him will gladly die.
Onward through the glade advancing,
As they pace they softly sing,
"Alleluia, honour, glory,
Praise to our Eternal King.
Aid us, LORD, we do beseech Thee,
Guide, oh, guide our steps aright,
Help us to uphold Thine honour,
Everlasting King of Light!"

Surging crowds impede their progress,
Scarcely can the monks advance;
While vindictive threat and gesture
Are expressed in word and glance.
"Mighty Thor," cry loud the people,
"Wield aloft thy hammer-head,
Let it fall in light and thunder,
Striking all thy foemen dead!"

High above the youthful victim
Gleams the sacrificial knife,
While the pagan priest is praying,
"Thor, accept this young boy's life!
May the strength of Asgard save us—
For the White CHRIST'S magic power
Casts a dreaded spell around us
In this mystic midnight hour."

Ere the knife can do its duty
Winfrid saves the frightened child,
Though the angry hosts around him
Scream in fury mad and wild.
High he holds the boy above him,
Loudly does his voice proclaim,
"CHRIST is King, and CHRIST shall triumph
Honour to His Holy Name.
Asgard's legions hide in cloudland,
Thor and Woden flee away,
Like the shadows of the night-time
At the breaking of the day."
Bravely Winfrid stands before them,
Raising his bright axe on high,
Striking hard the giant oak-tree,
While the splintered fragments fly;

Then he calls in tone derisive,
"Let your thunder-god descend!
Let his legions save his captive!
Let great Thor his oak defend."[1]

Silent stand the hosts around him,
Scanning heaven in solemn awe,
Waiting for Walhalla's heroes
Onward led by mighty Thor;
Still the burnished axe delivers
Strong and firm each ardent stroke,
While the wind in lamentation
Moans for Thor's most sacred oak.

Cracking thunderclaps resound not!
Forks of lightning are not seen!
No vast legions are descending
With their swords all bright and keen!
No great battle-gods are swooping
Down to earth in awesome might,
Midst the rolling peal of thunder,
In a blaze of blinding light!

[1] This incident in the life of S. Winfrid, who has been called the Apostle of Germany, took place at Fritzlar, near Geismar, in the year A.D. 724.

Ascard rests in sleep reposing,
Not a sound is heard on high!
Not one rift of shining glory
Pierces now the midnight sky!

Winfrid's work at last is ended,
Sundered falls the oak apart,
Luna sails across the heavens
Bidding darksome clouds depart.
Lo! her beams illume a fir-tree
Growing where the oak had been,
Straight in branch and fair in beauty,
Clad in robes of mystic green.
"This young fir is rich in omen";
Noble Winfrid boldly said,
"Now your faith in Thor has vanished
And his sacred oak is dead.
All your homes are built of fir-trees,
So each branch shall tell of peace;
For the joy of peaceful homesteads
Is a joy that ne'er shall cease.
When the forest leaves are withered,
Firs are still bedecked in green,
While they taper to the heavens,
Pointing high to realms unseen

Where the CHRIST shall give you welcome
To a home so fair and bright
That we scarce can form a vision
Of its beauty and delight.
When the Yule-tide feast is with you,
These green firs shall ever be
Bright with many lighted tapers
As the Holy CHRIST-Child's Tree.
All your little ones shall love them
With a love exceeding strong,
Dancing round gift-laden branches,
Singing low the Angel's song."
Winfrid ceased, and, lo! the fir-trees
Are, indeed, an organ vast
Where the wind plays wondrous music—
Low and sweet, then loud and fast;
While an echo from the mountain,
Like the sound of distant sea,
With the Angel choirs uniting,
Hymn the LORD'S Nativity.

Miscellaneous

Vain-Glory

YEAR by year the masons labour
On the minster's mighty pile,
Year by year, like marble forests,
Rise the chancel, nave, and aisle ;
Graven stone and painted window
Each a wondrous story tells,
Till at last within the belfry
Hang the consecrated bells.
Guarding all the minster-doorways,
Sculptured Kings and Prophets stand,
Martyrs, Saints, the Blessed Virgin
With the Apostolic Band ;
Like a dream of magic wonder
Carvings every stone enrich,
Yet, above the western portal
Still remains an empty niche.

Wrapped in thought before the minster
Stands the Bishop-Architect,

Gazing proudly on his building—
White and fair with sculpture decked;
Jewelled windows, pointed gables,
Massive towers soaring high
Make a picture of such beauty
That may even time defy;
"Lo! he cries with exultation,
"Freely gave I wealth untold,
So that GOD'S most glorious temple
Should have treasures manifold;
Freely gave I years of labour,
Freely gave I thought and care,
So that now no earthly mansion
Can at all with this compare.
I, alone, have built this minster,
Drawn the plan and cut the sod,
Raised aloft this noble structure
As my humble gift to GOD.
In yon empty niche my statue
Shall record this deed of mine;
So may men in future ages
Bless the builder of this shrine."

When the trailing robe of darkness
Hides the splendour of the sun

Weary eyelids close in slumber,
For the daily toil is done:
Then the Bishop saw in dreamland
GOD'S own Angel at His side,
Who from highest heaven descending
Came to be his willing guide.
Past the minster and the market
With its din of tramping feet,
Angel-Visitant and Bishop
Glided down the quaint old street,
Through the ancient city gateway,
O'er the moat so dark and deep,
On they sped to fair green meadows
Full of silent browsing sheep.
"I will show thee," said the Angel,
"Who it was that helped to raise
Yonder temple crowned with towers
Rising high above the haze.
Mark yon oxen straining, toiling,
Under fear of painful goad,
Dragging marble for thy building
Up the steep and ill-paved road;
Mark, the teamster stays their progress
So that they may breathe awhile

Ere they struggle up the hill-side
To the minster's growing pile,
Lo! a linnet on their yoke-beam
Sings a song of coming rest,
Prophesying in the future
Golden days for all oppressed;
Tripping lightly comes a maiden
O'er the daisy-spangled slope,
Like a vision of the springtime—
Joyous, bright, and full of hope;
In each hand she holds a bundle
Of such sweet and fragrant hay
That the eyes of both the oxen
Turn to greet her merry play.
Gently fondling each white forehead,
She presents her welcome gift,
While the weary, panting oxen
Their great drooping heads uplift.
Then the teamster bids his cattle
Strain once more at rope and pole,
While the block of shining marble
Slowly moves towards its goal."

"Thou hast shown me," cried the Bishop,
"How vain-glory fills my heart;

Teach me, Angel, how to fight it,
Teach me ere thou must depart.
Let my sin be purged for ever
As fair light the mists dispel,
Let me seek the Holy City
Where the lowly-minded dwell."
Then the Bishop's eyes were moistened
With his penitential tears,
And he woke to find that dreamland
Had created all his fears.
Yet, he held the vision sacred
As a message sent from GOD,
And he heeded its reproving—
Kissing oft the chastening rod.

So he bid the master-mason
Carve a statue of a maid
Holding wisps of hay in bundles
And in peasant-dress arrayed;
This he raised above the portal
And decreed that when he died
He should lie beneath that doorway
As a penance for his pride.
"Men shall tread above my body,"
Said the Bishop, speaking low,

"While my name shall be forgotten
And my deeds no man shall know,
No entablature of marble
With its shrine of costly stones
Graven o'er with crook and mitre
Shall enclose my crumbling bones,
Yet, in truth, the LORD will bless me
If I cast my sin aside
And, at last, in adoration
I shall see the Crucified.
On the tower, master-mason,
Carve two oxen, snowy white,
So that men in far-off pastures
May behold the wondrous sight—
One shall evermore be seeking
For the dawn of coming day,
While the other is illumined
With the sunlight's parting ray.[1]"

From on high those sculptured oxen
Told the tillers of the soil

[1] The Cathedral at Laon, France, was consecrated about 1200, and from the upper stage of the western towers look out colossal oxen, supposed to represent those that dragged the loads of stone up the hill used in the building of the great church.

How the humble temple-builders
Honoured were for dreary toil.
Then men thought of how the Master
Of that house so beauteous, fair,
Once was cradled in a manger—
Placed beneath the oxen's care.
Thinking thus of CHRIST the Saviour,
Thinking of that Babe Divine,
Men grew gentler to their cattle—
Pitiful to all their kine.

High within the airy belfry
Christmas chimes are softly rung,
Bright the minster is illumined
While the midnight Mass is sung;
White-robed choirs are sweetly chanting,
"JESUS CHRIST is born to-day!"
"Alleluia!" sing the people
As they homeward wend their way.

Hark! those stone, colossal oxen
Gently low in Holy Night,
While afar from byre and shippen,
Cattle answer in delight.
For in David's royal city
Once the ox bent down his head

When the CHRIST—the King of Glory,
Lay upon His manger-bed.
Far beyond the snow-clad meadows,
Shepherds heard those Christmas bells,
While an echo of their music
Floats across the distant fells;
Wafted on with rhythmic cadence
Comes the lowing of the kine—
Homage offered by the oxen
To the CHRIST—the Babe Divine.

Jeanne D'Arc

✣ ✣ ✣

LOUDLY thunder steel-capped squadrons
Riding on in brave array,
Though assailed by cruel arrows,
They will surely win the day.
For the Maid leads on to fame
Riding forth in CHRIST'S high Name.

Mark the lines of English archers
Grimly plying deadly bows,
While the doughty knights and nobles
Spur their steeds against their foes—
Riding on beside the Maid,
Who, forsooth, may be afraid!

Some there are who ride for lucre,
Some who ride for King and France,

Some, as haughty feudal vassals,
  Holding fiefs by horse and lance,
Yet, the Maid rides on for GOD,
Freedom, home, and native sod.

White the Maid and white her charger,
  Crimson-stained the battle-field;
Where her shining banner leadeth
  Stern and stubborn foemen yield;
Strong her purpose, true her deed,
Through her faith she shall succeed.

. . . . .

Craven king and ruthless nobles,
  Now are crumbling bone and dust,
Shield and helmet, sword and breastplate,
  All have fallen into rust;
Shattered now are lance and bow,
Shreds the Maid's fair flag of snow.

Knightly deed and knightly valour,
  Charging hosts and trumpet-blast,
All are faint as fleeting shadows
  In the dreamland of the past—
All like misty phantoms fade
Save the figure of the Maid.

In an aureole of brightness,
All-aflame before our eyes,
We behold her as a vision
Garlanded in Paradise;
True and faithful, firm and free,
Saint of GOD we sing to thee.

Saint Patrick

✣ ✣ ✣

HIGH upon the lofty mountain
Stood Saint Patrick on the rock,
Ardent love his soul inflaming
For the Saviour's scattered flock;
Oh, praise the LORD for Patrick's preaching!
For Patrick's life and holy teaching!

Vale and mountain, lough and river,
Rugged reek and rocky head,
Bluest bays with greenest islets,
These beneath him lay outspread;
To GOD on High his prayer addressing
He craved for Erin's sons a blessing.

Down the ages floats the story
How Saint Patrick rung his bell
On the mountain's misty summit,
Flinging it o'er crag and fell,
While ministering Angels caught it
And back once more to Patrick brought it.

Baneful toad and deadly serpent
Swept by unseen forces round,
Perished like a brood unholy
Falling through the void profound;
And Angel choirs for joy were singing
As still the wonder bell was ringing.

Celtic saints, we love your fervour,
For beneath these legends old
Lies the story of your triumph
Over dangers manifold;
May all temptations flee before us
For Angel hosts are watching o'er us.

Onward

✠ ✠ ✠

THOUGH clouds and darkness hide the splendour of the day,
While dim and low our lamps are burning,
Yet, in the pearly East the dawn will flood the gray
To crimson, with the sun's returning.

Though springtime daffodils are nodding now no more,
And April's bloom untimely closes,
Yet, honeysuckle climbs around our open door,
And summer wears a wreath of roses.

Though comrades drift away, and cherished friendships end,
And we, alas! are brokenhearted,
Yet, while we weep and sigh, we find a dearer Friend
From Whom we never shall be parted.

Though happy hours are few, and youthful dreams
have paled,
Some better hope is ever given,
And though it seems to us life's pilgrimage has failed,
Yet, earth shall be exchanged for heaven.

Visions

✣ ✣ ✣

ABBOT Ulric bid his mason
Carve within the Chapter Hall
Texts from out the Holy Scriptures—
Words that might be read by all:
"Father Abbot," said the mason,
"Name the words that I must grave
Deep and large in golden letters
On the spanning architrave."

"*When, alas! there is no vision*,"
Said the Abbot, breathing soft,
"*Then, indeed, the people perish!*[1]
Carve, my son, this verse aloft."

When the monks in solemn conclave
Saw that gold-illumined text,
Many groaned in inward spirit
For their souls were sorely vexed;

[1] Prov. xxiv. 18.

Others stood in thoughtful wonder
Knowing well each lofty height
Must be gained by toil and struggle
Ere the Vision bursts in sight;

Knowing too that through the darkness
Souls must climb the rugged way,
Yet at last there comes the glory
With the dawning of the day.

"Living are our wondrous bodies,"
Cried the Abbot, "but, withal,
Our poor souls are starved and dying
If we hear no holy call—
If we see no Vision splendid
Guiding us on life's rough road,
Aiding all to bear their burdens
And to struggle 'neath their load:
Though we eat and laugh and quarrel,
Sleep and work, and even die,
Yet, with no inspiring Vision
Life is but a fantasy."

When the brothers had departed
Stood the mason, deep in thought,

For the Abbot's words had moved him,
And his soul was sore distraught:
"How can I behold this Vision
Who, perchance, ne'er prayed aright,
Yet, good Father, I am longing
Once to see this wondrous sight?"

"Faithful work and high endeavour
With an ever honest mind,
These shall aid thee," said the Abbot,
"*They who seek shall always find.*
From the earth to farthest heaven
Stands a ladder steep and high,
All who climb its many rundles
Must upon its strength rely;
Though they toil through storm and tempest,
Though they suffer grief and pain,
Yet they, ceaseless, seek a Vision,
And they ne'er shall seek in vain,
For they hold a Faith undying,
Trusting GOD'S redeeming grace,
And at last they see the Vision
With the glory on His face."

The Legend of Eve and the Snowdrops

✣ ✣ ✣

STANDING within a wilderness of sand,
Lone, footsore, sad, Eve sighed for that fair land
Where she might dwell no more. Tears were the price
That she now paid for her lost Paradise,
While cruel blew the storm-winds' icy blast,
And everywhere the snow fell thick and fast.
Weeping, she shuddered, and with long-drawn breath
She prayed that all her woes might end in death;
And as she prayed and lowly bent her head,
A glorious Angel came and gently said,
"Look up! have courage now, for lo! I take
From out this drifting snow one single flake;
And while I breathe on it, behold, its form
Becomes a snow-white bud amidst the storm!"

Eve gazed in wonderment, for all around
White blooms, like flakes of snow, bedecked the ground—
A fragile wreath of pure-inspiring flowers—
The heralds fair of bright and sunny hours,
Then through her tears she saw the clouds depart,
The skies were blue, and hope rejoiced her heart.

S. Brendon and the Isles of the Blest

✣ ✣ ✣

HIGH on Kerry's lofty mountain
Brendon gazes far and wide
Over lough and stream and valley,
And the ocean's flowing tide;
All the day his thoughts are turning
To the wonders that may be
Where the sun sinks in his cavern
Far beyond the crimson sea;
All night long he sees the heavens
When the stars sweep round the pole,
While the moonlight on the waters
Makes a pathway for his soul;
On that silver stream he travels
To the far mysterious West,
Sailing ever in his slumbers
To the Islands of the Blest.
"Brendon, GOD will grant thy wishes,"
Said an Angel at his side,

"Rise, and plough the boundless ocean,
Seek whatever may betide;
Yearning towards a high ideal—
This is discontent divine,
Yet it is the root of progress,
Seize it, Brendon, it is thine!
High prophetic voices calling
Bid thee on thy voyage sail,
GOD will bless thy great endeavour,
Never shall His heroes fail!"

Brendon and his sixty comrades[1]
In their currachs large and wide,
Sail before the sun was setting
In the calm of eventide,
Sailing straightway to the ocean,
Steer to where the sinking sun
Finds repose beneath the waters
When his daily task is done,
Sailing forth in floods of glory
On a stream of living gold

[1] There is some difference of opinion as to the number who accompanied Brendon. In the Life in the *Book of Lismore* we are told there were twenty in each of the three boats, i.e., sixty in all. In the Metrical Life the number is raised to thirty in each.

Seeking those most wondrous Islands,
Full of pleasures manifold—
Islands where the holy Angels
Hover o'er them day and night,
Where no earthly care and sorrow
May their beauty ever blight.
Five long years they seek those Islands,
Five long years they seek in vain,[1]
Battling with the storm and tempest,
Tossing on the heaving main;
Yet they find the strangest marvels—
Huge leviathans at play,
Isles of ice, vast burning mountains,[2]
Regions where the night is day;
Frail their crafts, yet, still they doubt not
GOD will guide His servants right,

[1] The Life in the *Kilkenny Book* and the *Vita* in the *Salamanca Codex* state that the voyage was for five years. There was another voyage at a later date undertaken from Galway in a wooden ship, which lasted two years. This journey was probably to Brittany. The *Navigatio Sti. Brendani* confuses the two expeditions, and makes them into one journey of seven years.

[2] Modern research indicates that Brendon and his companions drifted on the first voyage as far as Iceland and the Shetland Isles. The volcano they saw was probably Mount Hecla.

Even should those magic Islands
Never rise within their sight.

Long the watchers on the headland,
Look for Brendon's boats in vain,
Sixty crescent moons are counted
Ere they sail to port again:
Glad hosannas ring triumphant
As they glide from out the West,
Brendon has at last discovered
Holy Isles of blissful rest—
Islands of unearthly beauty
Ne'er before disclosed to men,
Hidden in the waste of waters
Far removed from mortal ken.

Years sped on, yet still good Brendon
Taught the Faith and preached the Word,
So that many sons of Erin
Gave their souls to CHRIST the LORD.

Weak, infirm, and very aged,
He at last awaited death,[1]
When a solemn fear o'ercame him
Ere he drew his latest breath.

[1] He died at his sister's convent at Annaghdown, in his ninety-sixth year, May 16, 577, and his remains were interred in his Church of Clonfert.

Brig, his sister, gently whispered,
"Fears should never trouble thee!"
"Yet," he said in plaintive accents,
"Pray, my sister, pray for me!
When I voyage through the darkness,
To an unknown land, alone,
When I see my King's own features,
Can I then for sins atone?
When I hear the dreaded sentence
Spoken in the Judgement Hall,
Dare I hope for any welcome
From the righteous Judge of all?
O my sister, I am trembling
As my boat puts out to sea,
Fears and doubts her course assailing,
Pray, dear sister, pray for me!"

Lo! he smiled when death's grey shadow
Passed across his aged face,
And his sister knew his troubles
Were dispelled by GOD'S own grace.
Brendon then at last was sailing
On his long and final quest
To a safe celestial harbour
In the Islands of the Blest.

A Lament

✤ ✤ ✤

I KNEW a lane, a green lane by the lea,
Where happy children played and smiled to me,
Like merry ripples on a summer sea.

I knew a lane, a green lane by the lea,
Where fisher lads with hopes of love to be
Passed down to buffet with the changeful sea.

I knew a lane, a green lane by the lea,
Where weathered comrades sadly, solemnly,
Bore home the victim of the angry sea.

I knew a lane, a green lane by the lea,
The parting shadows fall on it and me,
As, all alone, I wander to the sea.

Vocation

✣ ✣ ✣

ONCE I sought the fleeting pleasure
Of a glance from sparkling eyes,
And with all my pulses throbbing
I beheld Love's wistful prize.

Once I laid a wreath of flowers
On the shrine of wild desire,
And, with strong and eager passions,
All my soul was set on fire.

Once I followed vain ambition,
Seeking after earthly fame,
Trusting that heroic action
Would perpetuate my name.

Then I heard a Voice declaring,
"Son, thy gifts and hopes must die;
What hast thou when they have vanished?
Lift thy heart, My son, on high."

Ever came that Voice of pleading,
"Earthborn dreams shall fade away;
Glory, honours, titles, riches,
Cannot always with thee stay."

Then I sought for high endeavour
As an influence for good,
And I joined the noble army
Of the souls who have withstood.

Yet, the One Who loves me whispered,
"Wait, My son, and learn My will;
Prayer and praise and meditation
Must be sought by keeping still."

By the world I am unheeded
While I clasp His piercèd feet,
Yet His dear Voice gives me courage
As I lie in silence sweet.

Doubt and darkness and delusion
Were my dreams in bygone days
Now in vision I behold Him
Robed in holiness and praise.

Quickened with His love undying
Here in patience now I rest,
Till He bids me, "Rise and follow,"
For He knoweth what is best.

Autumn Leaves

✣ ✣ ✣

ADOWN the glade the tripping leaves advance,
Like sylvan elves, in strange and rhythmic dance,
Clad fair in russet, rose, and opal sheen,
In crimson gown and cap of Lincoln green,
In amber robe and hood of pearly grey—
A motly crowd of dancers fleet and gay.
Onward these light and airy figures flee,
In all the wild abandonment of glee,
Like crested waves upon the ocean's breast,
Pursuing and pursued, yet, ne'er at rest.

When dancing leaves and merry sunbeams play,
Our spirits feel as radiant and gay
As laughing winds or unconfined delight,
For, lo! the magic glamour of the sight
Enthrals us with a spell which Autumn weaves
Of golden rays and countless coloured leaves.

The Blue Butterfly

✣ ✣ ✣

FLOAT ON, float on, gay butterfly,
With fragile wings of blue;
Two thousand years ago you kissed
The roses as you flew
Within a British garden bright
Where Roman children chased your flight.

Without a thought, without a care,
You sped where heather grew
Ere man had raised his giant stones
Encircling Stanton Drew;
Yet still in heedless haste you fly
And race the golden sun on high.

When caves were homes and Early Man
To Wookey Hole withdrew,
When hanging tendrils, like a veil,
The cavern's mouth o'ergrew,
Blue-winged you passed in airy grace
Enchanting all our human race.

Through all the joy of summer hours
  Ten thousand years you flew
With ne'er a fear and ne'er a sigh
  For skies were ever blue;
You do not die and pass away,
Earth knows you now and every day.

Through winter drear to magic spring
  You ever rise anew,
You flitted once through Plato's dream
  And yet you still pursue
Your joyous flight o'er scented blooms
And light, perchance, upon our tombs.

The Common Road

✣ ✣ ✣

WE toil along the common road, and pass from stage to stage
While sunshine, gloom, and cruel storms are our mixed heritage,
Some sad and weary wayfarers find nothing on the road
Save just such strength as they may gain to bear their heavy load;
One treads the way in anxious thought, another rides his steed,
Some roll along in easy state, while some on foot proceed,
And some in merry dance pass by, whose brows are crowned with flowers,
While some with cares are burdened sore who count the dreary hours.

Why haste these many wanderers? What is their
final goal?
Seek they repose, contentment, ease for spirit, mind,
and soul?
Seek they domains where they may rest, some lofty,
peaceful tower,
The subtle calm of closing day in sunset's golden
hour?
Seek they the land of fond desire where love will
never die,
Beyond the vale of mist and shade, where clouds
ne'er cross the sky—
A land where flowers never fade, and where our
dreams come true,
And when our robes all travel-stained their whiteness
may renew?
Seek they a land that knows no grief and where
there is no pain—
A land of everlasting youth where friend meets
friend again?

'Tis vain, O dreaming wayfarer, to speed along the
road
Intent upon the journey's end in spite of all thy
load!

Are there no banks to rest upon, no hedgerows
decked with flowers?
Are there no gleams of sunshine fair, no bright and
joyous hours?

O pilgrim on the common road, take now some joy
and rest;
The road is thine, and not till eve the sun sinks in
the West.

The Snowdrop

✣ ✣ ✣

Das Schneeglöckchen is the German name for the snowdrop, and the following verses refer to the idea that it is the herald of Spring, and its snow-white bell awakens the other flowers.

A WINDING-SHEET enfolds the silent lea—
A snowy shroud, each old and stately tree.
Winter, like death, is but a passing dream;
A halfway resting-place it doth but seem
Between the Autumn with her golden sheaves,
And Spring with all her countless opening leaves.
Say, who shall wake the flowers that gently rest
Safe from the piercing blast in earth's warm breast?
GOD shall Himself His faithful herald send
And bid the flowers their wintry slumber end;
E'en now soft music steals across the lea,
So sweet, so low, it scarcely seems to me
That ears like mine can hold so pure a sound,
Which riseth as it were from out the ground.
Yes, 'tis the call of Spring's exultant bell
Ringing triumphant o'er the snowy fell;

Far o'er the land the music wings its flight
Like sunbeams bringing earth new life and light;
The sound expanding far o'er ocean's foam
Shall call the swallows to their northern home.
Brave flower to dare the force of Winter's blast!
And ring thy bell when hope is overcast;
Fair emblem of a purer life to be,
A life enduring through eternity;
For we, like scattered seed in Autumn hours,
Shall in GOD'S springtime blossom into flowers.

Life

✣ ✣ ✣

I WANDER through the glades in budding Spring
Where all is bright and gay, where sweetly sing
The choirs of birds, where yellow cowslips raise
Their eyes to heaven, and all the woodland ways
Are overhung with dainty veils of green.
Within the magic spell of this bright scene,
As one enthralled I raise my voice and say,
"O elm-trees green! this is your festal day,
For once again in beauty are ye clad;
Rejoice, fair trees, and be exceeding glad!
The fragrant incense from a world of flowers
Is your reward for dull and dreary hours."
"Life after death!" a million leaves reply,
"Death after life!" the cowslips sadly sigh,
"But life once more!" the leaves sing in delight,
"For shining hours succeed the darksome night.
We know not death, we pass from life to life
As springtime follows winter-storm and strife."

'Tis night, and lo! I stand beside the sea
And feel its restless, vast immensity;
As swelling waves break in majestic roar,
Yet well I know there lies a sunny shore
Beyond the darkness of the solemn night;
I raise my eyes and see the twinkling light
Of suns as numberless as grains of sand
That lie embedded on the ocean strand.

Each distant sphere, each cowslip on the sod
Are new creations from the hand of GOD;
Each human soul, as well as star and flower,
Reveal the strength of GOD'S eternal power,
And yet, while countless ages onward roll,
GOD claims the love and homage of each soul
That He has made: with sin and peril past
In glorious strength the soul speeds forth at last
To do the will of Him Who gave it life,
Far, far removed from tumult, strain, and strife—
An aspiration after GOD'S desire,
A single string in His harmonious lyre.

Until the Day Break

✣ ✣ ✣

AS flies an arrow from a well-strung bow,
So sped a human soul; but who may know
The course it took within the silent night?
For Death's mysterious door shut out all light,
While we, who prayed and watched with tear-dimmed eyes,
Saw not the way it went nor in what guise
It left our earth. Grim sickness held it fast
For many weary hours; but when at last
It fled, not even bonds of strongest love
Could stay its flight towards some far world above.
Lo! must it roam in endlessness of space
Among the whirling spheres whose constant race
Encircle flaming suns? or, all alone,
Must it thus journey towards a realm unknown
Beyond the wall of stars, and fair and free
So enter into GOD'S eternity?

Within the dark it vanished out of sight
And left no trace of footprints in the night :
We could not see the path on which it trod,
But this we know—that soul went home to GOD.

The day now breaks, another sun shall rise ;
" Alas ! " we sigh with heavy, aching eyes,
" She will not see the dawning of this day " ;
And yet she rose and met the breaking ray,
Freed from the dust of earth and all its strife—
A dawn for her of Everlasting Life.

The Home-Land

✣ ✣ ✣

ADOWN the springtime of our early days
When all the world seemed fair; when all our ways
Led on through meadows bright with scented flowers,
And life was one sweet dream of sunny hours,
Our thoughts of heaven were of some distant place
Beyond the stars, where no familiar face
Gave welcome to those many souls who roam
And turn at length to seek their final home.
We thought of gates of pearl, of streets of gold,
Of ramparts high which surely must enfold
Strange forms with shining wings, of dazzling light,
And things beyond the ken of mortal sight.
But, in the peaceful autumn of our years
Now we have passed through sorrow, doubt, and fears,
The home we seek seems not so far away,
And it becomes more real day by day;

Its streets are peopled with the friends we love,
It is not built in misty realms above
The starry firmament, where all is strange,
Beyond the vision of our earthly range;
It is the Home-Land where the lone and sad,
The weary, poor, and weak shall be made glad.

We know full well this Home-Land is a place
Of progress in the higher planes of grace;
In deeper wisdom, and in richer life—
A home unhurt by sighs, or tears, or strife.

Fear not when silent death unbars his gate
That we may pass beyond our earthly state!
For then our trust in CHRIST, the Crucified,
Shall be our only hope, our stay, our guide.

Eternal Hope

✣ ✣ ✣

"For He must reign till He hath put *all* enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

THOUGH the shades of evil haunt us,
Though full oft we sin and fall,
We believe in Life Eternal—
We believe that GOD rules all.

GOD'S own hand has made our manhood,
And His goodness shall embrace
All the souls of His creation
Through the blessing of His grace.

GOD'S eternal fires are melting
Precious gold from meaner dross;
GOD alone completes the labour
Love allows no flaw or loss.

Love will cast the priceless treasure
Into fair enduring mould;
GOD will burnish bright His metal—
Virgin grain of proven gold.

Though the years may be in number
As the sand upon the shore,
Yet, at last, all stain of evil
Shall be purged for evermore.

Far beyond the future ages,
When this earth has run its course,
Good shall triumph over evil—
Love shall be the motive force.

The River of Death

STRONG, deep, and wide flows Death's dark river,
White mists hang o'er its strand;
We see afar no shining mountains,
No sun-illumined land;
Yet Birth and Death are twins united—
One starts us on life's road,
The other bears us through the waters
Back to the home of GOD.

A little child with golden ringlets
And sunny smiling face
Flung blossoms on those gloomy waters
With sweet and winsome grace;
And as he stepped within the river
We heard his clear voice ring,
"Bright angels! lead me through the darkness,
And take me to my King!"

A noble youth ran down the meadows,
And plunging in the tide,
Exclaimed in accents full of gladness,
"Though Death's dark stream be wide,
I follow where my Captain leadeth!
His dear Voice calls to me—
'Thy love is deep, my true knight errant;
Thou shalt My soldier be.'"

When he had sailed afar in triumph
An aged pilgrim came,
And stepping gently in the river,
Breathed low the Holy Name,
And when the mist has veiled his passage
We heard him softly say,
"For me, dear LORD, the dawn is breaking
And shadows flee away."

Though fleeting time may be deceptive,
This life at last shall end;
And when we too shall cross the river,
Kind Death shall be our friend!
Though ours may be but craven spirits,
For time sounds false alarms,
Yet well we know there are beneath us
The Everlasting Arms.

All Souls' Day

(IN PARADISE)

"Grant them, O LORD, eternal rest, and let perpetual light shine upon them."

✣ ✣ ✣

ON that far shore there is no sound of fear,
For Angels whisper music in their ear;
In that bright land no wayward will, no stain
Or trace of wilful sin may there remain;
For GOD'S encircling love, like purging fire,
Shall check each selfish thought and wild desire.
In happy glades of Paradise they rest—
CHRIST'S guarding arm now folds them to His breast.

In perfect trust we leave our dear ones there,
Until for us that morning breaketh fair,
When we shall see the Paradise of Light,
And our weak faith be satisfied in sight.

The Horizon Line*

WE watch a ship sail out to sea
Upon the ebbing tide,
And on the heaving ocean wave
We see it gently ride;
The sails are spread, the helmsman steers
To some far distant strand,
And well he knows he leaves behind
His friends and native land.

Upon the far horizon-line
The ship now disappears,
And yet we know the helmsman has
No need for anxious fears,
For other seas, both broad and wide,
Are stretched before his eyes;
And he still steers to some fair port
That in the distance lies.

And, lo! when dear ones pass away
  And vanish from our sight,
They, too, will sail o'er level seas
  T'wards GOD'S eternal light:
The dim horizon-line will be
  To them no sudden change;
We call it death—it is the Life
  Beyond earth's narrow range.

Life, Love, and Death *

✣ ✣ ✣

SLEEPING, dreaming, constant toiling,
Frequent in the strife,
Bearing pain, yet courting pleasure—
This we say is Life.

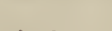
Souls in strength and joy united,
Songs of birds above;
Sunshine, music, orange-blossoms—
This we say is Love.

Loss of health and failing powers,
Gasping after breath,
Folded hands, as if in slumber—
This we say is Death.

Actors in a fleeting drama,
Earthly triumphs past;
Love will guide us through the portal—
Death brings Life at last.

Hymns

Hymn for the Holy Eucharist*



LO! the veil is rent asunder,
And behold! the Saviour stands,
Clouds of incense freely rising,
Scattered by His wounded hands;
Thus He pleads for Adam's children
In that fair and holy place,
While our prayers ascend as fragrance
To the very throne of grace.
Therefore with Archangels sing
Praise to our Eternal King.

'Tis the LORD Who blessed the children,
And Who raised the sleeping dead;
'Tis the CHRIST Who trod earth's cornfields
Who is still the living Bread;
Lo! His Blessèd Presence cometh
To His frail disciples here,

Kneeling in adoring rapture
While the King of Love draws near.
Therefore with Archangels sing
Praise to our Eternal King.

'Tis the CHRIST Whose hands extended
Hung on Calvary's bitter Tree,
'Tis the LORD Whose wounds and Passion
Plead through all eternity;
Thus He comes to give His people
Streams of Life from out His side,
While in adoration bending
They behold Him glorified.
Therefore with Archangels sing
Praise to our Eternal King.

Shepherd of our souls, befriend us,
Feed us with the living Bread,
Save the erring, guide the faithful,
Bless the living and the dead.
Laud and honour, praise and glory,
Be to CHRIST our great High Priest,
While we plead His every merit
In the Eucharistic Feast.
Therefore with Archangels sing
Praise to our Eternal King.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life*

✣ ✣ ✣

CLOUDS and darkness hide the pathway,
Lone and desolate we roam,
Storm and tempest rage around us
As we wander far from home;
Yet the Shepherd's voice is calling,
"Am I not the Living Way?
I will lead the lost and erring
Till the dawning of the day."
CHRIST—the Way, the Truth, the Life—
Guide us through all storm and strife!

Sore temptations whirl around us,
Hosts of evil fill the air,
Doubts and fears will gain a triumph
If our timid hearts despair:
"Am I not the Truth Eternal?
Troubled souls, oh, come to Me!"

May we answer JESUS' pleading:
"We will ever follow Thee."
CHRIST—the Way, the Truth, the Life—
Guide us through all storm and strife!

Change, decay, and death surround us,
All our paths are thorny ways,
Pain and sorrow, grief and sighing
Fill the measure of our days;
Down the ages floats the message:
"I alone can seek and save!
Am I not the Life Eternal—
Victor over death and grave?"
CHRIST—the Way, the Truth, the Life—
Guide us through all storm and strife!

Far beyond the boundless heavens
And the shining star-lit floor
Stands the Saviour with a welcome
At fair Salem's golden door!
Lo! in vision we behold Him
Cleansing us from all our sin
Ere we pass those open portals
To the blessed home within.
Saviour—guide us through all strife,
Thou—the Way, the Truth, the Life!

Praise

✣ ✣ ✣

PRAISE to the GOD of our fathers with glad adoration!
Worship and anthems we raise to the LORD of creation!
Gladly we sing,
Hail Thee all-glorious King!
Strength of our hope and salvation!

JESU Redeemer, in prayer and in praise we address Thee!
King of the faithful, Thy subjects for ever shall bless Thee!
Saviour of all!
Lowly revering we fall,
Here in Thy Temple confess Thee.

Spirit eternal, most Holy, Thy grace shall defend
us;
Hard be our hearts, yet the strength of Thy love
shall now bend us!
Shed on us light,
Chasing the shadows of night,
Spirit most Holy, befriend us!

Thrice Holy Trinity, praise we and ever adore
Thee!
Softly our anthems shall rise as sweet incense before
Thee!
Praise to Thy Name!
Thou art for ever the same,
Gladly Thy people adore Thee.

Knocking*

✠ ✠ ✠

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

SHADES of evening fill the valley,
Storm-blasts howl, the night-bird screams;
Yet within the homestead sleeping,
Thou art lost in idle dreams:
Who stands knocking at thy door?
Knocking, knocking evermore!

Ah! that door can ne'er be opened,
For the key is stiff with rust;
Latch and hinge, alas! are damaged,
And the bolt is clogged with dust:
Who stands knocking at thy door?
Knocking, knocking evermore!

Ivy climbs across the portal,
Rankest creepers bar the gate,

Common weeds and prickly thistles
  Make the pathway desolate:
Who stands knocking at thy door?
Knocking, knocking evermore!

Art thou hoarding gold and silver,
  Massing pearls from distant seas?
Lo! the Stranger at thy gateway
  Offers richer gifts than these:
Who stands knocking at thy door?
Knocking, knocking evermore!

Wherefore keep that Stranger waiting?
  Never, never say Him "Nay";
Night is waning: open! open!
  Soon must dawn the coming day:
Who stands knocking at thy door?
Knocking, knocking evermore!

Lo! a glory-crownèd Monarch
  On thy humble threshold stands;
Fair and noble in His presence,
  Though deep wounds are in His hands:
Who stands knocking at thy door?
Knocking, knocking evermore!

Ah, sweet soul, it is thy Saviour!
Bid Him enter as thy Guest;
Kneel and kiss His piercèd insteps,
Then indeed thou shalt find rest:
JESUS knocks upon thy door—
Make Him welcome evermore!

Commemoration Hymn [1]

✠ ✠ ✠

KING of Salem! LORD most Holy!
May Thy love befriend us!
Here within Thy hallowed temple
Gifts eternal send us!
Blest be Thy Name
Through the years Thou art the same,
May Thy bounteous grace defend us.

Here the Eucharist is offered
As our act of pleading
For the dead and for the living,
For the souls unheeding;
Dear Home of Rest!
In thy walls each contrite guest
On the Living Bread is feeding.

[1] This hymn was written for the nine hundredth dedication festival of the Church of S. Leonard, Bristol, now united with the Parish of S. Nicholas.

Patron Saints! GOD blessed your labours,
Faith, and steadfast preaching,
Sailings oft o'er restless billows,
Heathen countries reaching,[1]
May we too feel
Your deep love and burning zeal
For the Church and all her teaching!

Praise to GOD for saintly living,
Work, and prayer unceasing;
Blessed be he[2] who broke the fetters—
Slave and serf releasing;
Oh, praise the LORD!
Through His Saints who preached His Word
Sin and evil are decreasing.

Here nine hundreds years of worship,[3]
Honour, praise, and blessing

[1] S. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, is the Patron Saint of those who have business in deep waters, and all prisoners, captives, and slaves, as well as those unjustly condemned to death. Little children and schoolboys, as well as all travellers by land and sea, were greatly beloved by him.

[2] S. Leonard obtained permission from Clovis to release every prisoner where he visited, consequently he is regarded as the Patron of prisoners, and is represented in art with chains in his hands.

[3] The Church of S. Leonard was founded A.D. 1010, that is, 900 years ago. S. Nicholas was founded in 1030.

To the Trinity Eternal
Souls have been addressing:
LORD, grant that we
Like our fathers faithful be
Ever too our Faith confessing.

Beyond*

✠ ✠ ✠

WHEN the shadows gather round us,
When life's pilgrimage is o'er,
We shall see death's mist-clad ocean,
And our feet shall tread its shore;
We shall leave the dust of travel
In that ever-peaceful tide,
Bathe within its darksome waters,
And arise all purified.

Pilgrim staves and earth-soiled sandals
Shall be left on this world's strand,
Ere we sail on gentle billows
To that far and Better Land:
Drifting clouds may then surround us,
Ghostly shadows of the night,
Yet the breaking dawn of morning
Shall be then our beacon-light.

When the clouds and mists uprising
Have revealed the Promised Land,
Then our barque shall seek its haven
On the gold and pearl-strewn sand:
In the vale of youth and flowers
We shall meet each dear-loved face,
And all partings shall be ended
In a long and true embrace.

When we see the "Vision Splendid,"
When angelic anthems rise,
When the golden harps are sounding
Through the glades of Paradise,
We shall know that our Home-coming
To that Land beyond compare
Is our highest joy and rapture,
For our LORD and King is there.

Processional Hymn for the Holy Trinity*

✠ ✠ ✠

HAIL, festal day! Come join the Angel host
In praise to FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.
Chorus: Repeat Hail, festal day! etc.

The clouds are rent, and Sion's courts, behold!
With gates of pearl and streets of shining gold.
Hail, festal day! etc.

In vision fair 'midst streams of dazzling light
The Throne of GOD bursts on our raptured sight.
Hail, festal day! etc.

To harps of gold the countless Angels sing,
And through vast realms of space their anthems ring.
Hail, festal day! etc.

"Let ceaseless praise be offered unto Thee,
Most High, most Holy, Blessed Trinity."
Hail, festal day! etc.

"Let Cherubim and Seraphim adore
Thy sacred Presence ever more and more."
Hail, festal day! etc.

"Let incense rise before Thy mercy-seat
Whilst Saints cast down their crowns beneath Thy feet."
Hail, festal day! etc.

"Let all Thy works in earth, and sky, and sea,
In adoration own Thy majesty."
Hail, festal day! etc.

To GOD the FATHER let all praise be given
In lowest depths and in the heights of heaven.
Hail, festal day! etc.

To JESUS CHRIST, our LORD, Redeemer, King,
Glad psalms of triumph shall for ever ring.
Hail, festal day! etc.

And to the HOLY SPIRIT let us raise
Our sweetest chants and hymns of grateful praise.
Hail, festal day! etc.

Let glory, praise, and honour rise to Thee,
True Light Divine, Adorèd Trinity.
Hail, festal day! etc.

Saint Aidan *

WE thank the LORD for Aidan's life
And all his tender pleading,
That won our sires from heathen strife
To follow JESU'S leading;
Far from Iona's Isle he came,
Apostle to our nation,
And now we honour his dear name
With sounds of exultation.

O'er hill and dale he wandered wide
To tell the Gospel story—
How JESUS lived, how JESUS died,
How JESUS reigns in glory;
The serfs, the thanes, and fishermen,
All flocked to hear his preaching,
While rich and poor, o'er crag and fen,
Came oft to seek his teaching.

Our fathers held the Faith he taught;
Shall we not too receive it?
Our fathers for its truth have fought;
Shall we not too believe it?
Our fathers fought, so fight we must
In JESU'S strength and power;
And Holy Church we too shall trust
And find our Refuge Tower.

The Church unfolds her banner wide,
So fears shall ne'er betide us,
Our King is CHRIST, the Crucified,
And He will ever guide us;
So now we stand in armour bright,
For crafty foes surround us,
Our King will guard us through the fight,
His Saints are all around us.

Human Souls, like Earthly Temples*

✣ ✣ ✣

HUMAN souls, like earthly temples,
Must have their foundation-stone
Sunken deep beneath the surface,
Lost to sight and all unknown;
Yet the Master placed it there—
Level, true, and laid with care.

Human souls, like earthly temples,
Slowly rise with massive walls,
Till, at length, the vaulted archways
Firmly roof the spacious halls;
Boss and keystone hold the span
Raised upon the Builder's plan.

Human souls, like earthly temples,
Buttressed firm, must rise still higher,
Till o'er pinnacle and turret
Soars aloft the airy spire;
While upon the utmost height
Gleams a Cross in shining light.

Human souls, like earthly temples,
  Must with costly gifts be fair,
Sculptured shrine and storied windows,
  Graven brass and marbles rare;
For the Master must behold
His own temples bright as gold.

Human souls, like earthly temples,
  Must with joyous song abound—
Nave and transept, aisle and chancel
  Shall re-echo with the sound—
Praise the Master-Builder's fame!
Praise! oh, praise His Glorious Name!

Thanksgiving *

✠ ✠ ✠

ALL glory be to GOD on High!
All blessing and all praise!
All honour to the King of kings
Whose love guides all our ways.

We gather on the mountain heights
Where holy feet have trod;
We raise the Cross our fathers held
Before the hosts of GOD.
All glory, etc.

"One Faith, one Church, one LORD," shall be
Our ceaseless battle-cry,
While evil spirits ambush keep,
And crafty foes draw nigh.
All glory, etc.

Our arms are bright, our banners gleam,
Who fears what may betide?
The LORD of hosts, the King of kings,
Shall surely be our Guide.
All glory, etc.

Lift high the standard of the Cross!
March on in firm array!
Though fierce the battle, long the night,
There dawns a golden day.
All glory, etc.

Glad victors sing exulting songs!
The wounded ones shall rest!
Bright hosts of GOD shall enter in
Jerusalem the blest!
All glory, etc.

Children's Verse

Legend of the Robin and the Crucifixion

✣ ✣ ✣

WELCOME, welcome, little robin,
With thy ruddy breast;
Gladly all the children greet thee,
Stay awhile and rest.
Stay and seek a kindly shelter
From the cruel blast,
Till the snow-flakes cease their dancing,
Till the storm be passed.

Far away in distant ages,
Far through time and space,
Once a robin saw the Saviour—
Looked upon His face,
Saw the CHRIST, His Cross upbearing,
Stagger 'neath its load:
Crowned with thorns, that Royal Victim,
Fell on Calvary's road.

Oh! the bitter pain and sadness
Of that awful sight!
Even birds looked on in anguish,
Resting in their flight.
Then the robin plucked a thorn-spike
From the Saviour's crown,
And the Holy Blood of JESUS
Dyed its breast of down.

Welcome, welcome, little robin,
Crimson is thy breast;
All the children long to greet thee,
Come and be our guest!
Come in tempest, storm, and sunshine,
Sadness, pain, or glee;
Ever true and ever faithful,
We will welcome thee!

A Daisy

WHERE the yellow sand-rose blossoms
On dunes above the sea,
Where the harebells all are ringing
A fairy melody,
Where the sea-pinks laugh in gladness,
Where tinkle heather-bells,
Where the frolic winds come dancing
From off the distant fells,
Where the wiry-bent is arching
To make a skipping-rope,
Lives a maiden with her sisters,
Upon a grassy slope.
She is young and very graceful,
So lissome and so light;
With a bonnet, new in fashion,
And frillings all of white:

Some may call her quilted head-dress
Quite Puritan in style,
But they all declare its plainness
Suits well her face and smile.
Neater gown and neater mantle
No eye has ever seen!
While the critics say her garments
Are many shades of green!
Thus she stands, her keen eye beaming
Like some enchanted bride,
While the sun smiles on her beauty
In all his golden pride.
Day by day she grows more lovely,
More chastened, pure, and fair;
While at night the sparkling dewdrops
All cluster in her hair.
Standing softly on her tiptoes,
She peeps within the nest,
For it is her greatest pleasure
To see the fledgelings drest.
Many winds dance all around her,
With them she will not roam,
For she says that joy and duty
Abide in love at home.

Skylarks bring her loving greetings
From silver clouds above;
Butterflies relate their stories
Of sunshine and of love;
Day for her is bright with sunshine,
Yet night brings peace and rest,
When the twilight draws the curtains
To hide the crimson West.
Then the cloudland of the heavens
Becomes a mighty wold,
Where ten thousand nodding daisies
Are clad in robes of gold.

Keys of Heaven

✣ ✣ ✣

ONWARD trooping through the meadows,
Lithesome, gay, and debonnaire,
Comes a troop of merry children,
Tossing heads of flaxen hair.

All are bright as glancing sunbeams,
Happy as the springtime hours;
Each has hung the yellow cowslip
On a dainty chain of flowers.

Yellow cowslips, keys of heaven,[1]
Turning locks in doors of gold;
Children, you may ever use them,
Finding treasures manifold.

Dancing through the fresh green meadows,
Racing onward with the breeze,
Looking out with eyes of wonder,
Thus you seek the golden keys.

[1] The German name of the cowslip is *der Himmels-schlüssel* —the keys of heaven.

Children, you alone shall journey
Through a fair and wondrous land,
For you hold the keys of heaven
In each small and chubby hand.

Yellow cowslips, yellow cowslips,
Golden keys on garlands swung;
Open wide the gates of heaven
To the truthful, pure, and young!

Grand Duchess Girlie

✤ ✤ ✤

OH! will you be an empress?
Or will you be a queen
With crown, and orb, and sceptre,
And robe of golden sheen?
Your ladies will be bowing
Like bluebells in a breeze,
Your soldiers will be standing
Like avenues of trees.

Your chamberlain will whisper
"Just smile" when you are sad,
And often you'll be sighing
When you perchance are glad;
Great nobles will uphold you,
Brave gallants bear your train;
Though thunder-clouds may gather,
You'll have a golden reign.

You'll live in some vast palace
And sit upon a throne,
Awhile it may be dreary
Thus seated there alone!
For queens of mighty nations
Must live in solemn state,
Yet, surely, dearest Girlie,
This shall not be your fate!

So you must be a Duchess
Of some old German town
Where gable leans towards gable
And streets wind up and down;
Your home shall be a castle
Upon a lofty hill,
Where you may feed the swallows
On your own window-sill.

Then you shall ride a palfrey
Whenever you go out,
And all the little children
Will greet you with a shout;
And you shall say, "Dear children,
I loose you all from school
That you may go a-maying
With no restraint or rule."

Then you shall bid your shipmen,
Who sail upon the seas,
Rest in your tiny harbour
And seek a time of ease,
While all the burdened bondsmen
Who sighed in days of yore
Shall live a life of freedom
And carry nothing more.

Thus all shall live in plenty
Because your purse is long,
While you shall be the Duchess
Of this sweet land of song,
Where men may sing all morning,
Where children play all day,
Where feasting, fun, and frolic
Make even sad hearts gay.

Now when you hold your fête-day
The folk shall dance all night,
And all your stately castle
Shall be a blaze of light;
Your cat in robes of crimson
Shall dance with not a few,
And when you ask for music,
She'll raise her voice and mew.

Your Mother, Aunts, and Uncles
And Cousins great and small
Shall bow and scrape and curtsy
Whenever you may call;
In dressing-gown and slippers,
With ne'er a sound or word,
Your Dad shall pipe a solo—
So low it is not heard.

Then I shall be your jester
And joke when you are sad,
And shake my bells and whistle
Whenever you are glad:
But scenes we build in dreamland
Are always very fair;
Alas! they too shall vanish—
Like castles in the air.

Toys

HULL half the joy in all the world
Belongs to folk all under seven;
If older ones could be as true
Then earth would be a perfect heaven.

Their cardboard farms and painted trees,
Their wooden towns with spire and steeple,
Are more to them than vast estates
Could ever be to older people.

The Engineer sees once more
A boy, whose wooden spade is making
High citadels of golden sand
Which crested waves are ever taking.

In later years the Merchant-prince
Bethinks him of his boy flotilla
That crossed the pond with pebble freight
Without mishap or dreaded Scylla.

The Artist's eye beholds a lad
Sketch all his pedagogues for pleasure
When he should be intent upon
Some mystic algebraic treasure.

The Hero of a golden deed
Thinks not upon his own life-story,
But sees his old tin soldiers march
On nursery floors in search of glory.

When toys are placed in tiny hands
We little know what we are giving,
For all who learn to play aright
May also learn the art of living.

The Legend of the Lilies and the Easter Eggs

✣ ✣ ✣

IN a garden rich in beauty
Grew the lilies tall and fair,
While the sighing breezes whispered,
"Each is sweet beyond compare."
In that garden sang the song-birds,
"Lilies fair! O lilies dear!
Bright will dawn your day of gladness!
Eastertide will soon be here!
Then you'll stand in all your fragrance,
Near the altar of the King!
Then you'll hear the little children
All their glad Hosannas sing!

Then you'll see the tapers gleaming—
Stars above the incense-cloud!
Then you'll hear the music swelling
Sweet and soft, then strong and loud!

Then you'll see the earthly worship
Offered to the King of Love—
Echo of angelic rapture
Wafted from the realms above!"
So the lilies all were gathered
In the dewy morning hour,
All were radiant as sunbeams—
All save one neglected flower.

Then she begged the wind to help her
And the singing birds as well;
But the wind had many duties!
How to aid he could not tell!
So a little feathered songster
Stood upon the lily's leaf;
And she sang her sweetest ditty,
Telling of the lily's grief.
Weary with the long exertion,
Still she would not stay her song—
Thus her music brought the people
Wondering why she sang so long!

So they took the bending lily,
Placed her in an altar-vase,
And her sisters stood around her,
Beautiful as morning stars.

Then the little bird flew homeward—
To her eggs that lay at rest—
Cold, neglected, all untended,
In her poor and humble nest.
But the kindly sunshine's magic
Changed her eggs, and, now, behold,
All lie perfect in new splendour—
Rainbow-tinted, silver, gold.

The Fairy Knight

THE fairy knight is arming
And buckling on his mail—
A strong defence in battle
Of shining mackerel-scale.

His helmet is a limpet
With plume of cotton-grass—
His crest a sparkling dewdrop,
His motto "Ne'er surpass."

His sword is long and pointed,
Made from a hornet's sting,
It is a poisoned weapon—
A most unpleasant thing.

A thorn from off the bramble
Has made a spear quite well,
A rose-leaf forms his pennon,
His shield a cockle-shell.

An earwig is the charger,
  Curveting high in air;
And thus he rides to battle—
  A knight without compare.

He gallops down the valley,
  He spurs his fiery steed,
While all the field-mice question
  The reason for such speed.

His foemen are the stormwind,
  The tempest, and the gale;
And these he meets in combat
  Upon a grassy dale.

With stratagem and courage
  He fights the gallant foe:
Alas! he falls defeated
  Beneath the stormwind's blow.

The Legend of the Holy Night

✣ ✣ ✣

THE snow falls fast in Bethlehem,
Upon the Christmas morn,
When CHRIST, the everlasting King,
Is in a stable born.

The icy wind blows in the cave,
So cruel and so wild,
That tears of anguish fill the eyes
Of Mary's Holy Child.

Upon a heap of straw He lies,
And shivers in the cold;
No swaddling clothes of gay device
His naked limbs enfold.

In pity come the ox and ass,
Dumb, solemn, reverent,
And gently breathe upon the Babe,
With heads most lowly bent.

That kindly warmth brings back the glow
To infant arms and feet,
While holy hands in grateful joy
Those loving creatures greet.

The pigeon plucks her downy wings
To make a cosy nest,
Whereon the ever Blessed Babe
May softly lie at rest.

The kindly sheep presents her wool,
So warm, so soft, so white,
That it may form a coverlet
To give that Child delight.

The spider spins her web of gold
To shield the Babe's fair head,
And, like some shining aureole,
It gleams above His bed.

A little creature 'neath the straw
Possessing no renown
Can spin no web of fairy gauze,
And owns no wool or down!

It has no gift that it can give,
No treasure to impart,
And yet that little creature has
A truly loving heart.

It finds a flower in the straw,
All withered, dried, and dead;
And with this fragrant herb it climbs
Upon the manger-bed.

In JESUS' hand it gently lays
This sprig of withered leaves,
While that sweet Child with smile and kiss
The faded gift receives.

Then JESUS calls a moonbeam down,
And gives one silver ray
To His small friend whose dried-up bloom
Gave joy on Christmas Day.

So when the glow-worm shows its lamp
We think of Holy Night,
And how that tiny creature gained
Its gleam of pearly light.

WITHDRAWN

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